
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Global Mission with a Smile

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During recent years, Adventist missionary dental clinics around the world have grown to a total of more than 100. Located in metropolitan and rural areas, these clinics are staffed by dedicated dentists serving their fellow citizens and by missionary dentists trained in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Cuba, England, Holland, and Sweden. Indeed, Adventist dentists have taken to heart the advice to "Put your money where your mouth is."

These professionally trained men and women are at the forefront of Global Mission. In Swaziland, Africa, dentists trail-blaze mission work by driving a mobile clinic to rural schools. As children are checked for cavities, the dental team spreads goodwill among the local people, preparing the way for the evangelists who follow.

Because of the positive reports regarding Adventist dental work in nearby Kenya, the small Moslem country of Djibouti invited us to provide them with dental services. Land for a clinic and a home for the resident dentist have been donated. This dentist will be the first Adventist worker in the country. Djibouti's southern neighbor, Somalia, has followed suit. Thus, dentists have been the first to begin work in the two countries that remained unentered by Adventists in the Eastern Africa Division.

Dentists in Korea take a team approach to outreach. On weekends, dentists and their spouses visit villages near Seoul. While the technical part of the operation sets up an open-air clinic to care for a huge number of aching teeth, the other half of the team sets up flannel boards and tells Bible stories to the children. Evidently, this dual approach produces excellent

results, for usually in a short time, a pastor or Bible worker accompanies the dental team to distribute Bible lessons. These weekend village clinics have been instrumental in establishing several new churches in places where there was no Adventist presence.

One Adventist Indonesian dentist includes plans for an evangelistic series in his annual budget. He conducts these meetings himself, and at the conclusion leaves a church built and a new congregation organized.

Influential people also notice the dedication and quality service of Adventist dentists around the world. Recently, the chief medical officer of the U.S. Department of State and Foreign Service mentioned that he was acquainted with the Adventist work and dentists around the world. He added that he sends all Beijing staff members for treatment at the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital dental clinic. President H. Kamuzu Banda of Malawi is so impressed with the dental care provided to his nation that he has personally made a substantial contribution to construct an Adventist dental facility in the country's new capital, Lilongwe.

Because dental clinics are able to provide a needed service to diplomats, government officials, business executives, and wealthy nationals in the metropolitan areas of the world, these Adventist clinics are soon able to cover their operating expenses. Funds received from affluent clients are used to extend these services to people who could not otherwise afford them. In this way, mobile, bush, and village dental clinics are supported by the work of the metropolitan clinics. No patients were ever denied dental care because they are unable to pay.

Getting dentists into the mission field has become more difficult, however. Recent regulation changes in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Thailand require that examinations be taken in the national language. This makes it nearly impossible for foreign-born and foreign-trained dentists to work in these countries. Difficulties in the Philippines are also occurring, but with God's help the health mission will continue.

The National Association of Seventh-day Adventist Dentists (NASDAD) has been one of the strongest supporters of the dental missionary program. This North American organization has provided continual financial support to this church program. Over the past few years, NASDAD has donated over \$200,000 to dental projects. At the Fall 1990 NASDAD convention, the organization contributed \$13,500, half of which was designated for the upgrading of dental equipment in South American clinics.

Much progress has occurred since 1947 when the first Adventist dental mission was established in Caracas, Venezuela. Many dental missionaries have followed the lead of Dr. Harry Slough, who established a self-supporting mission in Shanghai, China in 1948. The dental missionary program is only one example of how dedicated Christians can use their professional expertise in the service of the One who sent his followers "to preach the kingdom of God and to heal" (Luke 9:2, RSV).

Interested in learning more about this outreach program? Contact Eldon E. Carman, D.D.S., Health and Temperance Department, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-6600, U.S.A.